Magic language

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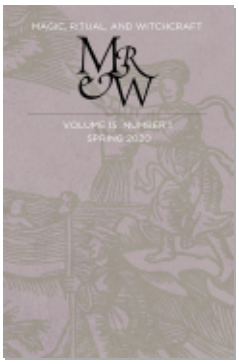

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Magic Language: The Transmission of an Idea over Geographical Distance and Linguistic Barriers

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The aim of this article is to map out a fascinating transnational path regarding the transfer of ideas concerning witchcraft. Our objective is to demonstrate how language has the ability to carry and transport an ideological doctrine across national and linguistic borders—in this case, knowledge directly related to the learned European doctrine of demonology, which influenced witchcraft persecution all over Europe.

The areas investigated are two locations in northern Europe, namely Scotland and Finnmark, the northernmost district of Norway. The latter was called Vardøhus in the seventeenth century, and had a district governor as the highest authority. The district of Vardøhus covered the approximate area of Finnmark county in 2019, an expanse of 48,649 square kilometers and comparable to the area of Denmark. In the following, the modern name Finnmark will be used both for the district of Vardøhus and for the modern county.[1]

However, the choice of these two areas is not based on their geographical positions but rather on the exceptional intensity of the witchcraft persecution and the ideological content of the witchcraft trials that took place there in

1. The County of Finnmark was dissolved on Jan. 1, 2020 and merged with the county of Troms to form the new Troms og Finnmark. However the Finnmark area has a strong regional identity unlikely to be erased by the merging of counties.

Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft (Spring 2020)

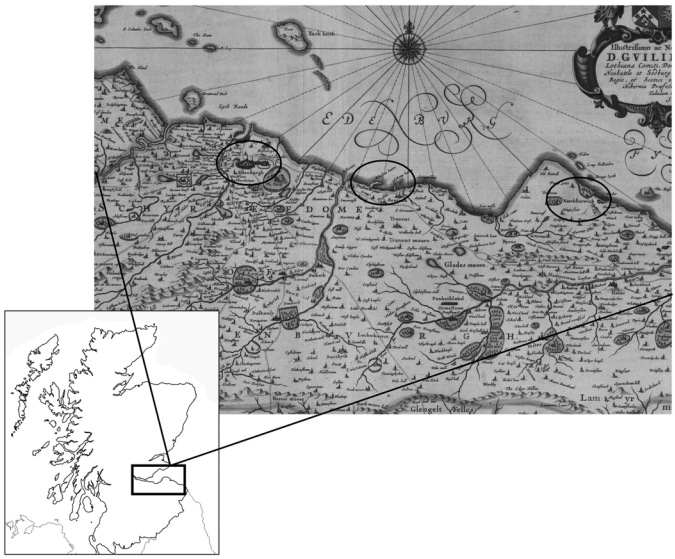

Figure 1. Extract from Joh. et Cornelius Blaeu's *Atlas of Scotland*, 1654. Encircled are Edinburgh, Achinson's Haven, and North Berwick, all mentioned in the text. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. Outline map of Scotland obtained from https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=15861.

the early modern period. It is estimated that nearly four thousand persons were accused and around two thousand five hundred individuals were executed in Scotland in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[2] In the county of Finnmark, which had a population of only three thousand people, ninety-one people died as a consequence of torture or execution. In Scotland and Finnmark, the frequency of accusations against women was 84 percent and 82 percent respectively. Among the ninety-one persons executed in Finnmark, seventy-seven were women and fourteen were men, which is similar to the average gender distribution in Europe, where women comprised on average 80 percent of the accused and executed.[3]

The witchcraft trials in Europe started in Catholic Switzerland in the 1400s, and made their way to northern Europe, where this type of trial

2. Julian Goodare, "Witch-hunts," in *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, ed. Michael Lynch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 644–45.

3. Liv Helene Willumsen, *Witches of the North: Scotland and Finnmark* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 63 and 246.

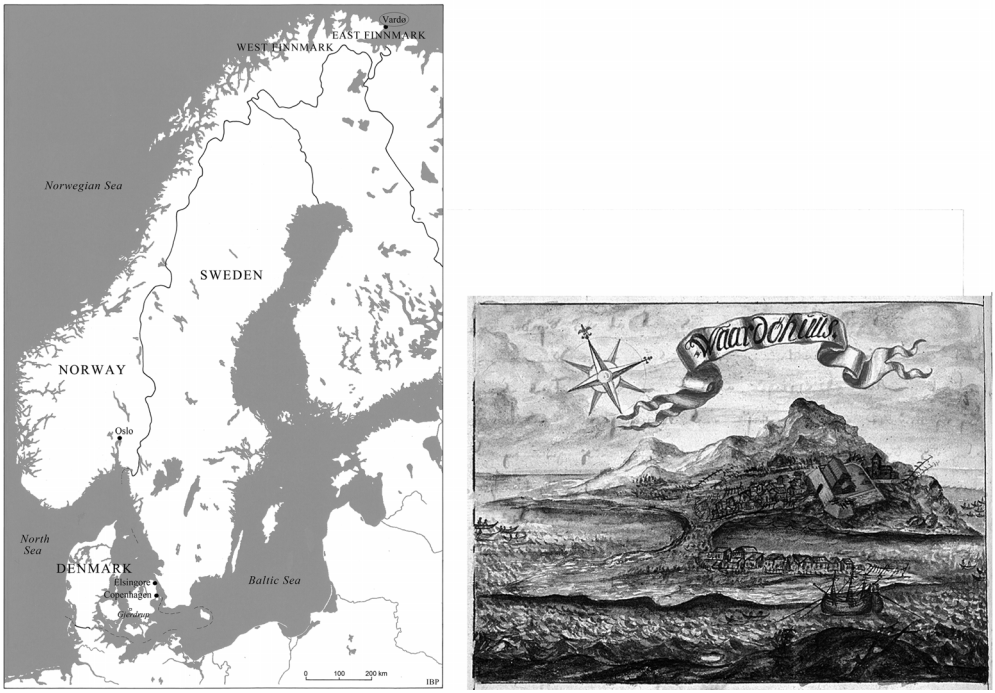

Figure 2. *Left*: Map illustrating the location of the county of Finnmark (formerly Vardøhus) and the town of Vardø. Made by Inger Bjerg Poulsen. *Right*: Water color of Vardøhus Castle made by District Governor H. H. Lilienskiold in *Speculum boreale*, 1698. © University Library of Tromsø. At the rear of the island is the location of Steilneset ("Gallow headland"), where sentenced witches were burnt.

mainly occurred during the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century. In total, around fifty thousand persons were executed during the European witch hunt, which lasted from about 1400 until about 1750.[4] The district of Finnmark suffered severe witchcraft persecution throughout the seventeenth century. From a population of three thousand inhabitants around 1600, 135 persons were brought before the court accused of witchcraft during the period 1600–1692, and ninety-one persons were sentenced to death. In a European context, this means that Finnmark ranks relatively high when it comes to the intensity of witchcraft trials.[5] The Finnmark

4. Julian Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt* (London: Routledge, 2016), 27.
5. Liv Helene Willumsen, "Oral Transfer of Ideas about Witchcraft in

witchcraft trials were intense with respect to Norway as well, as one-third of the total executions in witchcraft trials in Norway took place in Finnmark.

In the seventeenth century, Norway was in a union with Denmark, with the king residing in Copenhagen. Two ethnic groups were living in Finnmark at the time, the ethnic Norwegians and the Samis, with the latter group constituting around 20 percent of the population. The Sami minority had a reputation for sorcery.[6] The king's representative in Finnmark, the district governor, was installed at Vardøhus Castle in the village of Vardø, and among his manifold duties, which included collection of taxes and the keeping of law and order, was the eradication of witches. The latter aspect of the district governor's duties was enhanced after King Christian IV went on a voyage to Finnmark and the Kola Peninsula in 1599. He there became aware of the many witches of the north, and in 1609 the king wrote a letter to the district governors of the two northernmost counties of Norway, where he stated that no mercy should be shown in cases against people of Sami origin, who by nature were inclined to sorcery.[7] However, during the Finnmark witchcraft trials, the majority of the accused and executed were Norwegian women, not the Sami. This fact is linked to the fact that two different concepts of witchcraft came to the fore during the trials. Initially, during the first two decades of the seventeenth century there were few cases, and those that did occur tended to focus on traditional witchcraft, *maleficium*, or the casting of harmful spells. A relatively high proportion of these cases were located in West Finnmark and involved Sami men. From 1600 until 1619, nine persons were sentenced to execution, seven men and two women. Six of these men were Sami, and they were accused of *maleficium*.[8]

A change in climate toward witches seems to have developed around 1620, resulting in a panic in 1620–1621. Demonological ideas based on the learned European doctrine of demonology entered the picture. The predominant persecution of Norwegian women is linked to this demonological concept of witchcraft, in which the Devil's pact and witches' gatherings were central notions, and which resulted in a concentration of linked trials or panics. The

Seventeenth-Century Norway," in *Spoken Word and Social Practice: Orality in Europe (1400–1700)*, ed. Thomas Cohen and Lesley Twomey (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 52.

6. Ibid., 50.

7. Liv Helene Willumsen, "Exporting the Devil across the North Sea: John Cunningham and the Finnmark Witch-Hunt," in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters*, ed. Julian Goodare (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), 52.

8. Liv Helene Willumsen, *Steilneset: Memorial to the Victims of the Finnmark Witchcraft Trials*, trans. Katjana Edwardsen (Oslo: Norwegian Public Roads Administration, National Tourist Routes/Varanger Museum IKS, 2011), 11–19.

change had to do with the 1617 decree, "Om troldfolk og deres medvidere" ("About Witches and their Accomplices"), when demonological ideas were incorporated into the legal definition of witches. It also had to do with the installation of the Scotsman John Cunningham (c. 1575–1651). The panic of 1620–1621 was the first legal prosecution of witchcraft after Cunningham was appointed district governor of Vardøhus in the spring of 1619.[9]

The main accusation concerned a disastrous storm in 1617, when ten boats with forty men from Kiberg and Vardø sunk on the day before Christmas. After the start of the panic, alleged witches were transported to Vardøhus from neighboring villages, accused of having caused the shipwreck. The trial started in the fishing village of Omgang with the trial of Karen Edisdatter in May 1620.[10] She denounced several other women, which resulted in imprisonments the following year. In late April 1621, Kirsten Sørensdatter, who lived in the small fishing village of Kiberg, was imprisoned. Later the same year, on August 9, a court meeting was held in Omgang, where Lisebet Nilsdatter was accused of witchcraft. Court records are intact for four of the cases: Karen Edisdatter's, Kirsten Sørensdatter's, Lisebet Nilsdatter's and Mette Thorgjersdatter's. The fate of the other women is known through pieces of information in the regional accounts, where the crown's expenses for burning witches are registered.

During the first witchcraft panic in Finnmark, twelve women were sentenced to death. Of these, eleven were Norwegian and one was Sami.[11] One was released in expectation of a session of the local court the following spring.[12] The connection between Norwegian women and panics throughout the period of witchcraft persecution is highly significant.[13] The same is the case for Devil's pact confessions. Only one man, a Sami, gave a light version of a Devil's pact confession, saying when asked that the Devil had taught him witchcraft.[14]

The aim of this article is to explore the transmission of particular demonological ideas to the Finnmark area by tracing certain linguistic markers which can be associated with the ideology of the demonologists. Similar topics have

9. Liv Helene Willumsen and Diane Baptie, "John Cunninghams karriere og bakgrunn." *Norsk Slektshistorisk Tidsskrift* 43, no. 3 (2013): 159–76.

10. Regional State Archives of Tromsø (RSAT) (Statsarkivet i Tromsø) SF 6, fols. 10v–12v.

11. Willumsen, *Steilneset*, 20–31.

12. RSAT, SF 6, fol. 41r.

13. Liv Helene Willumsen, "Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 2008), 108, n. 336.

14. Willumsen, *Steilneset*, 34.

been discussed by the authors before, but the linguistic arguments offered in this article are new. The possibility of connecting linguistic markers to the transfer of ideas and to identifiable persons, namely King James VI and the "king" of Vardøhus, John Cunningham, concretizes important aspects of our previous research.[15]

Our focus is on two striking linguistic features that emerge in our historical sources, the court records from the witchcraft trials. We will demonstrate how cognate words found in the source material on both sides of the North Sea in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries offer direct evidence for transmission of certain ideas linked to them. Through these concrete examples, we will argue that a direct oral transmission is evident, and that the transmission trails two individuals. The ideas transmitted, as will be seen, had a significant impact on witchcraft persecution in Scotland and Finnmark alike.

An intriguing geographical pattern emerges: both Scotland and Finnmark are located to the north of more dominant regions—England and central, southern Norway respectively. In neither area do we find trials with learned European content, until 1590 in Scotland and 1620 in Finnmark. At that time of change, a strong persecution of witches occurred in these two areas to the north, conducted by the state in the form of the church and the courts. The person of highest authority in the areas played a crucial role, be that the king of Scotland or the Danish-Norwegian king's prolonged arm, the District Governor of Finnmark.

The astonishing situation of a king personally interrogating witches, which we see in Scotland, is illustrated in an image from the pamphlet *Newes from Scotland*, which was published in London in 1591 and widely circulated. This pamphlet contained detailed information from the North Berwick trials—a series of linked trials taking place before the Central Court of Edinburgh from 1590 to 1591. The name "North Berwick trials" stems from the confessions of the accused persons during these trials; they allegedly took part in a witches' convention in the town of North Berwick in East Lothian, to the east of Edinburgh. The illustration from *Newes from Scotland* below (Figure 3) shows King James VI personally interrogating suspected witches at his palace, Holyroodhouse, during the trials of 1590–1591.

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15. Rune Blix Hagen, "At the Edge of Civilisation: John Cunningham, Lensmann of Finnmark, 1619–51," in *Military Governors and Imperial Frontiers c. 1600–1800: A Study of Scotland and Empires*, ed. Andrew Mackillop and Steve Murdoch (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 29–51; Willumsen, "Exporting the Devil across the North Sea"; Arne Kruse and Liv Helene Willumsen, "Ordet Ballvollen knytt til transnasjonal overføring

Figure 3. Woodcut from *Newes from Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1591) © Lambeth Palace Library. James VI interrogates witches at Holyrood Castle.

The image of the king taking an active part in a witchcraft trial repeated itself in certain ways in Finnmark some thirty years later. Here, the District Governor John Cunningham personally interrogates witches at Vardøhus Castle during the trials of 1620–1621. Both interrogators apply their intellectual conviction and knowledge as well as the authority of their rank to interfere personally by launching new and fashionable concepts in the courtroom. A parallel scenario emerges: the king of Scotland, "the Head of State, Kirk and Ports," and the "king" of Finnmark, act out similar roles. While James VI is formally king, the District Governor is king by proxy. John Cunningham's Scandinavianized name is rendered in various ways, playing with the phonetic sounds as well as with the semantic meaning of the word "king": *Hans*

av idéar," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 93, no. 3 (2014): 407–24; Willumsen, "Oral Transfer of Ideas about Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Norway."

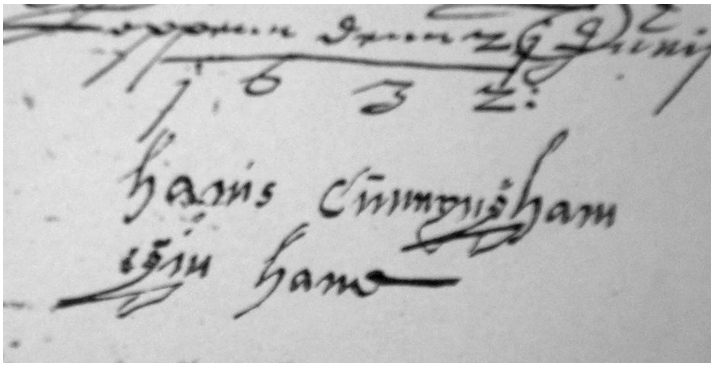

Figure 4. Illustration of John Cunningham's signature, own hand, underlined, where he signed his name as *Hans Cunnyngham,* National Archives of Denmark, Danske Kancelli, Indlæg til Registre og Tegnelser samt henlagte Sager, June 21, 1632.

Cunnyngham, Hans König, *Hans Kønigh*, and *Hans Køning*.[16] (See Figures 4 and 5) His authority in Finnmark would have been indisputable. The image of the local "king" of Finnmark is an echo of the Scottish king questioning witches at Holyroodhouse; both men are supremely important actors in their respective scenes.

THE KING AND THE "KING"

King James VI of Scotland (1566–1625, reigning from 1567) was highly educated and well acquainted with current learned thinking on the continent about witches. At the start of the North Berwick trials, he was still a young man of twenty-four and just back from Denmark, where he had been to fetch his queen, Anne, daughter of Fredrik II of Denmark and sister of the reigning King Christian IV (see Figure 6).

King James VI and Princess Anne were married by proxy at Kronborg Castle in Denmark in August 1589, with the fifth Earl Marischal, George Keith, standing in for King James VI. The King had experienced great difficulties in getting his bride over to Scotland, as the royal Danish squadron carrying her for the first time, in September 1589, was driven back to Norway as a result of heavy storms. The king himself went over to Oslo to meet his bride in October 1589, where the marriage was sanctified in November

16. Diane Baptie and Liv Helene Willumsen, "From Fife to Finnmark: John Cunningham's Way to the North," *The Genealogist* 28, no. 2 (2014): 180–201.

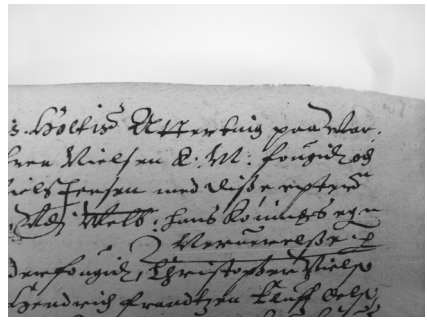

Figure 5. Illustration of Cunningham's name entered in the Finnmark court records, underlined: *Hans Könings egen Neruerelße* [Hans Köning's own presence]. Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate [Statsarkivet i Tromsø, Sorenskriveren i Finnmarks arkiv, no. 6, fo. 27r, April 26, 1621.

Figure 6. *Left*: James VI and I (1566–1625), portrait dated 1619 © National Museums Scotland. *Right*: James VI, portrait dated 1595 © Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

of the same year. Then the king and his queen went to Denmark where they stayed until April 1590, finally arriving in Leith in Scotland on May 1. Prior to the king leaving Denmark, witchcraft trials had begun in Copenhagen, imprisoning and persecuting women supposed to be responsible for the storm that disrupted the queen's voyage in the autumn of 1589. The trial records from Copenhagen Central Court are preserved for a few of these trials, and

a popularized account also exists.[17] The image of devilish witches raising storms was established in Denmark and adjacent Swedish areas well before 1590.[18] In Copenhagen in 1590, witches' relation to the Devil was encapsulated in the idea that these women had been awarded a personal devil, an idea found in Nordic countries and paralleled in England.[19] However, the Danish witches confessed that they had their witches' meetings in a house, not in a field. The meme of witches' gatherings in a field first appears in Scotland and then in Finnmark. In what follows, we will claim that this pattern of distribution can be seen as evidence for the idea that the ideological motive behind the severe persecution of witches in Finnmark did not originate in Denmark but in Scotland.

In November 1590, the same year as the trials that took place in Copenhagen, the witchcraft trials that were later named the North Berwick trials started in Edinburgh. In both cases, the content of the persecution was clearly based in the doctrine of demonology. The king took upon himself the role of the main interrogator during the North Berwick trials, and a broad spectrum of demonological ideas were introduced into Scottish witchcraft trials for the first time. As a learned and widely read person, he was also the only monarch in Europe to author a monograph on demonology, which was published in Edinburgh in 1597 under the title *Daemonologie*.[20]

Several scholars—including Christina Larner, Jenny Wormald, P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, Brian P. Levack, Julian Goodare, Thomas Riis, and Liv Helene Willumsen—have taken an interest in the potential influence of Denmark on the North Berwick trials.[21] In 1973, Christina Larner had already argued that new ideas about "the demonic pact and the witches' meetings to worship the Devil . . . became a central point in many later Scottish prosecutions."[22] Larner finds two explanations plausible: one is that King

17. Henrik Carl Bering Liisberg, *Vesten for Sø og Østen for Hav. Trolddom i København og Edinburgh* (Copenhagen: A. Christiansens forlag Hermann-Petersen, 1909).

18. Liv Helene Willumsen, "Trolldom mot kongens skip 1589 og transnasjonal overføring av ideer," *Historisk tidsskrift* (Denmark) no. 2 (2019): 309–44, 314–18.

19. Charlotte-Rose Millar, "Dangers of the Night: The Witch, the Devil, and the 'Nightmare' in Early Modern England," *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 7, no. 2 (2018): 154–55.

20. James VI, *Daemonologie, in forme of a dialogue* (Edinburgh, 1597).

21. Willumsen, "Trolldom mot kongens skip 1589 og transnasjonal overføring av ideer," 326–27.

22. Christina Larner, "James VI and Witchcraft," in *The Reign of James VI and I*, ed. A. G. R. Smith (London: Palgrave, 1973), 74–90: 80. The article is reprinted in Christina Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief* (Oxford: Basil

James was "introduced to demonology and titillated by it in Denmark, and returned to Scotland suggestible and ready to see witchcraft where he had seen none before."[23] Larner thinks that King James got the demonological ideas in meetings with two Danish scholars, the astronomer Tycho Brahe and the theologian Niels Hemmingsen. The other plausible explanation is that "when rumours of treasonable sorcery started, he [King James] was receptive rather than sceptical."[24] It was the idea of an assault on his kingly person that convinced him about the reality of "the sorcery threat." Larner maintains that the witchcraft trials in Edinburgh and Copenhagen were generated to account for the naval misfortunes in bringing Anne of Denmark to Leith. "For James they were an opportunity to identify his enemies and stir up support."[25]

P. G. Maxwell-Stuart contests Larner's argumentation.[26] He notes that King James did not take any interest in witchcraft before 1590, so the question is posed whether the king's trip to Scandinavia 1589–1590 could have changed this. He maintains that the king's conversations with Tycho Brahe and Niels Hemmingsen do not give any support for the transfer of demonology. He argues that the satanic pact was mentioned in a Scottish catechism already in 1532.[27] He also maintains that in none of the extant papers relating to the East Lothian witches is there any suggestion that they were "attending anything like a Continental *Sabbat*."[28] However, all the North Berwick trials were dealing with witches' meetings—among others, the North Berwick convention and the witches' meeting in Acheson's Haven in Prestonpans (also called Pans), which is a field near the sea, and where, on Lammas Eve in 1590, a meeting was held in which a wax figure was used to perform witchcraft.[29] A meeting was also held between Cousland and Carberry, which

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Blackwell, 1984), 3–22; however all following references are to the earlier publication.

23. Ibid.,82.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 83.

26. P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, "The Fear of the King is Death: James VI and the Witches of East Lothian," in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, ed. William Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 209–25.

27. Ibid., 212.

28. Ibid.

29. Berit Veierud Busch, " 'They shipped all in at North Berwick in a boat like a chimney': Foprestillinger om samlinger knyttet til de hekseanklagede i North-Berwick-prosessene" (Master's thesis, University of Tromsø, 2018), 53–63.

is also a field, and beside Bara, which is a field near a small river.[30] In addition, Agnes Sampson confessed to meeting the Devil in a field near her house.[31]

Jenny Wormald agrees with Maxwell-Stuart that the Denmark stay was not the reason for the Devil's pact to appear in the North Berwick trials.[32] Brian P. Levack and Julian Goodare agree that the most important aspect of James's involvement in 1590–1591 was that it politicized Scottish witchcraft.[33] Thomas Riis objected that it was unlikely that Denmark was the source for the Devil's pact, since Danish witchcraft accusations were largely based on village malefice, an argument where moderation is required.[34] Liv Helene Willumsen argues that King James got his new knowledge from ongoing witchcraft trials in Copenhagen before he left Denmark in the spring of 1590.[35] There he learned about collective witchcraft and demonic witches' gatherings, and in particular, about witches raising storms and personal demons. Willumsen claims that the king himself was a carrier of demonological ideas across the North Sea.

The other "king," the Scotsman John Cunningham, was born around 1575 in Crail, Fife, across the Firth of Forth from Edinburgh and North Berwick. Articles on him have been written by Rune Blix Hagen, Diane Baptie, and Liv Helene Willumsen.[36] As a young man during the North Berwick trials, it is inevitable that he would have been well informed on the dramatic events that took place in Edinburgh, as news of the trials would have followed a coastal path quicker than on land. In addition, local witchcraft trials took place in the neighborhood of Fife during his younger years. Thus, the

30. Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 139–140.

31. Ibid., 243.

32. Jenny Wormald, "The Witches, the Devil and the King," in *Freedom and Authority: Scotland c. 1050–c. 1650: Historical and Historiographical Essays Presented to Grant G. Simpson*, ed. Terry Brotherstone and David Ditchburn (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2000), 165–80: 166 n3.

33. Julian Goodare, "Witchcraft in Scotland," in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 306–7.

34. Thomas Riis, *Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot . . . : Scottish-Danish relations c. 1450–1707*, vol. I (Odense: Odense University Press, 1988), 266–69; Goodare, "Witchcraft in Scotland," 304.

35. Willumsen, "Trolldom mot kongens skip 1589 og transnasjonal overføring av ideer," 326, 328.

36. Hagen, "At the Edge of Civilization"; Baptie and Willumsen, "From Fife to Finnmark"; Willumsen, "Exporting the Devil across the North Sea," 49–66.

persecution of witches would have been well known to him.[37] These experiences and the new demonological ideas that were launched in the witch hunt are likely to have imprinted themselves on the mind of the young man.

John Cunningham knew King James VI and his personal involvement in the North Berwick trials. The king wrote a personal recommendation for Cunningham to his brother-in-law, King Christian IV. Cunningham served in the Danish-Norwegian navy in 1603, and by 1605 he had already obtained the rank of Captain and was placed in charge of the first major Danish expedition to Greenland. After having lived and worked in Denmark for sixteen years, it is very likely that he knew Danish well at the time he was appointed District Governor in Finnmark in 1619, and thus he would have been able to communicate with Norwegians. (More on the aspect of Danish vs. Norwegian later.)

When he entered his position in Finnmark, one of Cunningham's tasks was to cleanse the area of witches following two royal decrees. The first of these, dated 1609, is mentioned above. In the second decree, from 1617, a definition of the "true" demonological witch was incorporated into the letter of the law.[38] It is, however, only with Cunningham's arrival that the new concept of what constituted a witch entered the judicial procedures.

Cunningham came to a local community where a dramatic storm in 1617 had caused the shipwreck of ten boats, when forty men from the villages of Kiberg and Vardø drowned on Christmas Eve. Naturally, people were trying to understand how this could have happened and the memory of the disaster still would have been very present in the local community when Cunningham arrived. During the first years of Cunningham's office in Finnmark, a severe witch hunt was started. Cunningham himself interrogated the suspected witches, and for the first time in Finnmark, demonological ideas were introduced, providing a new and learned explanation for the shipwreck tragedy.

John Cunningham performed his duties with great effort and conviction, a fact evident from the sheer number of witchcraft trials he presided over and the forty-one people executed as witches under his governorship—an exceptionally high number by any standard.[39] After serving as District Governor in Finnmark, he retired in 1652 to Denmark, and died soon after.

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37. Stuart Macdonald, *The Witches of Fife: Witch-hunting in a Scottish Shire, 1560–1710* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2002).

38. Liv Helene Willumsen, *Trollkvinne i nord* (Tromsø: Høgskolen i Tromsø, 1994), 56.

39. Willumsen, *Steilneset*, 20–60.

A unifying feature of these two "kings' " approaches to their duties was their shared learned concept of witchcraft, related to the doctrine of demonology. As the intention of this article is to pinpoint the transfer of specific witchcraft ideas from one geographical area to another, it is crucial to outline the two core concepts in their shared mentality.

MALEFICIUM AND DEMONOLOGY

Two types of trial occurred during the European witch hunts, corresponding to two different concepts of witchcraft. On the one hand, there were isolated trials, where one person at a time was brought before the court and accused of practicing traditional sorcery, known as *maleficium*.[40] *Maleficium*, or malefice, was understood to be harmful magic. Prosecutions for harmful magic occurred sporadically throughout the Middle Ages, almost all of individuals. Julian Goodare writes that "[a] practitioner of harmful magic in one place might be called a '*maleficus*,' which would later be the standard early modern term for a witch."[41] However, not all magic was harmful. "Sorcery" is a broader term for magic which could cover beneficent kinds as well. As Goodare also notes, Bernard Gui's inquisitor's manual, written in the 1320s, describes "sorcery" (*sortilegium*) as "involving everyday rituals like healing by incantations, finding lost or stolen goods, or love-magic—largely beneficial services that magical practitioners provided to their clients."[42]

This age-old type of sorcery is well known in most cultures, understood to include practices such as casting spells on animals and human beings to cause sickness or death. Accusations of this type of magic occur in the context of widespread beliefs that certain persons possess an inherent power to cause harm through magic on an *individual* level, often by the use of charms or enchanted objects (as in Figure 7, an illustration by Olaus Magnus).

This concept of maleficent witchcraft resulted in people being brought before the court in trials of individuals in most European countries, including Scotland and Norway, at an early stage of legal organization and practice.[43] Both in the old Norwegian regional law codex from *Gulaþing* and in King Magnus the Law-mender's unified national law code from 1274 and 1276 there are special mentions of how to deal with individuals who commit sorcery.

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40. Willumsen, *Witches of the North*, 4.

41. Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt*, 36.

42. Ibid.

43. Christina J. Ross, "Scottish Demonology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Its Theological Background" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1962), 45–50.

Figure 7. Illustration from Olaus Magnus, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (Rome, 1555). A Nordic witch causing a storm.

A change took place in learned European thinking concerning witchcraft with the launch of demonological works from the late fifteenth century onwards. The doctrine of demonology introduced the concept of collective witchcraft and resulted in a fear among legal and clerical officials of an ungodly, hidden army of the Devil's accomplices on Earth. Over an interval of thirty years, the demonological doctrine strongly came to influence the witchcraft trials in Scotland as well as in Finnmark. According to this new perception of witchcraft, a suspect's ability to do evil was based on transference of power from the Devil to the witch.[44] This type of witchcraft had the Devil at its core, and a pact between the alleged witch and the Devil was the central element. By entering such a pact, she or he agreed to become the Devil's secret servant and to contribute to introducing the Devil's kingdom on earth. The witch was tempted by the Devil to enter such a pact, and was often offered sustenance or luck with animals, sometimes money, as well as powers like shapeshifting, in return for the service. There was understood to be a ritual connected to the entering of the pact, where the witch renounced his or her Christian baptism and promised to serve the Evil One.

This type of witchcraft was typically understood to be performed on a *collective* basis, including elements such as witches' gatherings and collective witchcraft operations.[45] The accused persons' confessions of witches' meetings and collective acts of witchcraft led to the denunciation of several new

44. Liv Helene Willumsen, *Witches of the North*, 5.

45. Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-hunt in Scotland* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 107, 193.

suspected persons, who were each brought before the court and accused of collective witchcraft. These demonologically based trials mostly occurred during concentrated periods of time, often called witchcraft panics by historians.[46] A large number of the death sentences during witchcraft trials were passed during panics, and they mainly involved women.[47] The authorities and the judicial apparatus were very concerned about witchcraft confessions related to demonology, and such confessions frequently led to the death sentence. It is precisely these types of confessions that provided us with insight into the transmission of specific ideas, which it is the ambition of this article to uncover.

WEATHER MAGIC IN A FINNMARK COURTROOM

We would now like to enter the Finnmark courtroom during the first panic of 1620–1621 and present those who actively took part in the procedure in order to answer the question of how, in practice, such demonological ideas could be transmitted.

The judicial officials are the district governor, John Cunningham, the bailiff, Søffren Nielsen, and the magistrate, Niels Jensen Sall. The latter two were Danish and educated in Copenhagen. The deputy bailiff, in charge of the jury, was a local, Jon Davidsen. The jury, consisting of twelve trustworthy men, were all from the local community. In addition to the judicial officials and the men in the jury, there were also local people present in the courtroom.

During the panic of 1620–1621, a broad range of demonological witchcraft ideas appear in the trials, which are in contrast to traditional witchcraft concepts. We believe that the transmission of such learned notions happened by direct oral transfer. The transmitter is likely to be John Cunningham, who was in command of both the Scottish and the Danish language, who knew Scottish witchcraft trials, and in his legal capacity, could introduce specific terms into a Norwegian courtroom.

Individual mastery of magic related to the sea was a well-known idea in Nordic countries, and involved, for example, selling wind to sailors in the form of three knots on a rope, which would release the wind when untied (as illustrated in Figure 8).

In sixteenth-century Denmark, weather magic on a collective basis that

46. Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2006), 32–51; Rolf Schulte, *Hexenverfolgung in Schleswig-Holstein 16.-18. Jahrhundert* (Heide: Verlag Boyens & Co., 2001), 14.

47. Willumsen, *Witches of the North*, 249–330.

Figure 8. Illustration from Olaus Magnus, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (Rome, 1555). A *Finn* (Sami) selling wind to seafarers in the form of three knots on a rope.

produced severe storms was believed to have resulted in two spectacular events before some trials taking place during the summer of 1590. The first time was in 1543, when some witches outside Elsinore had allegedly bewitched a royal fleet of twenty-four ships to be used in the war against the Holy Roman Empire, preventing the ships from reaching the shores of the Netherlands. The second time was when witches allegedly raised a storm along the coast of Gotland in 1566, resulting in the sinking of twelve of the Danish fleet's biggest and best ships.[48] This shows that collective witchcraft resulting in storms was widely known in Denmark fifty years before a similar evil activity affected King James VI's bride.

It seems obvious that the topic of weather magic and collective witchcraft would have been discussed at the Danish court when King James was visiting in the spring of 1590. It appears, however, that when these ideas eventually reached Finnmark in the 1620s, they do not seem to have made the journey directly from Denmark. The linguistic wrapping bears the stamp of Scotland.

ADMIRAL: THE COURTROOM USE OF THE WORD

In the source material from the witchcraft trials in Finnmark the word "Admiral" is first used in the case of Anne Lauritsdatter in 1621. Hans H. Lilienskiold uses the term in his copy of the legal records, and then only as a

48. Liisberg, *Vesten for Sø og Østen for Hav*, 21.

single word.[49] Hans H. Lilienskiold was District Governor at Vardøhus from 1684–1701, and copied part of the sentences in witchcraft trials in a handwritten document, printed in an edited version by Hagen and Sparboe.[50] Lilienskiold repeats the term "Admiral" in his condensed rendering of the trial against Kirsten Sørensdatter,[51] and in addition, it appears in the cases of Kirsten Sørensdatter in 1621, Lisebet Nilsdatter in 1621, and Anne Edisdatter in 1624.[52] Kirsten Sørensdatter's trial took place "in the presence of the illustrious Hans Køning."[53] Most likely, Cunningham had been present at all trials held at Vardøhus Castle, as this was his residence.

It is quite clear that "Admiral" and the extended phrase "mester och Admiral" (Master and Admiral) were memes throughout the whole panic of 1620–1621 in Finnmark. The latter expression was first introduced in January 1621 and was repeated throughout the panic. In the trial of Kirsten Sørensdatter, in the documented presence of John Cunningham, Kirsten was denounced by seven other accused women, whose information came to the forefront, voiced by the interrogator:

> His Royal Majesty's bailiff, Søffren Nielsen, asked her why so many witches had denounced her for being familiar with witchcraft and sorcery, adding that if this was the case, and if she were willing to confess of her own accord, she would not be tortured. She fiercely denied she had any such skills; they had slandered her cruelly. Since seven witches have denounced her for being familiar with the craft, as she herself has heard from their testimonies about her, and since, according to the sentences that were recited to her, "she was their master and *admiral*" [hun Vaar mester och *Admiral* for dennem] and also learned a bit from them, the court found that she should be tried by the water ordeal.[54]

It is important to notice how the concept "Master and Admiral" is established in the interrogative court context by the use of repetition. When the trial of Kirsten Sørensdatter started, seven trials were already finished, and seven accused women had confessed that Kirsten Sørensdatter was their "Master and Admiral." All of the accused most likely agreed in response to a leading question, which means that the term "Master and Admiral" probably

49. Hans H. Lilienskiold, *Trolldom og ugudelighet i 1600-tallets Finnmark*, ed. Rune Hagen and Per Einar Sparboe (Tromsø: Ravnetrykk, 1998), 91.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 93.

52. Ibid., 93, 95, 99.

53. RSAT, no. 6, fol. 27r.

54. RSAT, no. 6, fol. 27a; Liv Helene Willumsen, *The Witchcraft Trials in Finnmark, Northern Norway* (Bergen: Skald; [Vadsoe]: Varanger Museum IKS, 2010), 27.

had been used repeatedly during the interrogations leading up to Kirsten Sørensdatter's trial.

When threatened with the water ordeal, Kirsten confessed to the Devil's pact, giving a narrative account of how she learned witchcraft. "*When asked* if she was the cause of Hendrich Meyer's death, she confessed (. . .)."[55] This time, we do not know who asked her. Probably all the officials in the courtroom could pose questions to her during interrogation.

In the courtroom discourse, it becomes clear that in the interrogation of Kirsten Sørensdatter, it is the bailiff who uses the expression "mester och Admiral." He states firstly that Kirsten herself had been present in the courtroom and had listened to seven convicted witches' denunciations of herself as being familiar with witchcraft. Secondly, the bailiff pressures Kirsten and admonishes her to confess willingly in order to escape torture. Torture was in use from the very beginning of the panic of 1620–1621. In the confession of Karen Edisdatter, 1620, there is a connotation to the rack: "Moreover, she confessed that when she was loath to harm people, the Devil would torment her cruelly, stretching her limbs so that she bled from her nose and mouth and was near demented."[56] Thirdly, he forcefully argues that since these condemned witches have testified that she was their "Master and Admiral," she is now seen as a suspect and is found to undergo the water ordeal. Also, the argument that convicted witches, themselves regarded as guilty, had pointed her out as a witch and as their "Master and Admiral," strengthens the accusation from the perspective of the judicial official. The seven women who had confessed before Kirsten, could easily have answered to leading questions and thus used this expression. Threatened with both torture and the water ordeal, Kirsten Sørensdatter admitted a couple of days later, also this time "in the very own presence of the illustrious Hans Køningh,"[57] that she had practiced witchcraft and that she was guilty in several of the accusations "except that she was not their Admiral" (Vden Alleniste, Att hun Jche Vaar *admirall* for dennem).[58]

We may establish that the mental space of this particular persecution of witches is set in the frame of the courtroom where the bailiff draws on several conceptual domains, such as "courtroom roles," "respect of authority," "legal rights of the court," and so on, that we can take for granted that all of the

55. RSAT, no. 6, fol. 28r, author's italics.

56. Willumsen, *The Witchcraft Trials in Finnmark, Northern Norway*, 26.

57. RSAT, no. 6, fol. 28r.

58. RSAT, no. 6, fol. 29r. The highlighting of the word is from the original court records.

accused women were familiar with and will have accepted.[59] Still, one cultural dimension of the frame, in the form of the language of the court, is not straightforward, for although Danish and Norwegian are very close languages and can be said to be mutually comprehensible, we must assume that most of the accused local women would not have been frequently exposed to the spoken Danish they heard in court, and it could possibly have been in the periphery of their knowledge base. Therefore, it may be significant that it is Kirsten Sørensdatter who makes use of the extended phrase "mester och Admiral." Being Danish by birth, she would have been familiar with the Danish that the District Governor and his clerks had spoken in court, and she, more than the other women accused, may therefore have been likely to repeat elements of the language she heard from the court authorities.

In addition to the Danish used in the Norwegian setting, we also note the rather specific frame "Admiral" within the more generic frame "naval commander" that the interrogator makes use of to establish a conceptual link to the accusation "serving the Devil." We will need to explore this term used in this unusual setting more in detail.

ADMIRAL: THE WORD AND THE METAPHOR

The word "Admiral" is highlighted in the original document by the use of Latin lettering and enlarged letters in the otherwise gothic handwriting (see Figures 9 and 10). This is according to a tradition in Danish handwriting at the time, where Latin and Latin-based loanwords were accentuated this way in Danish texts.[60]

Etymologically, *admiral* or *amiral* is from Arabic *amīr* ("leader") and the article *al* came via Latin or Old French into many European languages. In medieval Latin, *amīr* seems to have been confused with the Latin verb *admirari*, "to admire," adding a *d* to the word in many languages (OED). *Admiral* was used in Danish in 1576 (SDE) and had most likely made its way into Danish and Norwegian via Low German or Dutch, along with many other military and naval terms in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[61]

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59. Gilles Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thought and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1985]).

60. Peter Skautrup, *Det danske Sprogs Historie*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske, 1947), 136.

61. See examples in ibid., 257–59. The following abbreviations will be used for dictionaries here and following: DOST: *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. http://www.dsl.ac.uk/. Accessed November 20, 2017.; ODS: *Ordbog over det danske Sprog*. 1918–1956. Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, Copenhagen; OED: *Oxford English Dictionary*. Online edition. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com. Accessed

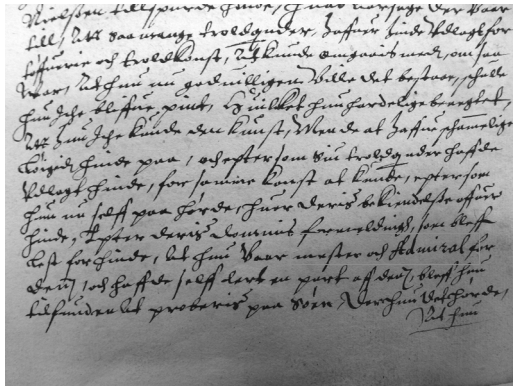

Figure 9. Extract from the court proceedings demonstrating the use of Latin letters in the word *Admiral* in the phrase *mester och Admiral* [Master and Admiral], here underlined. Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate [Statsarkivet i Tromsø, Sorenskriveren i Finnmarks arkiv], no. 6, fo. 27r, April 26, 1621.

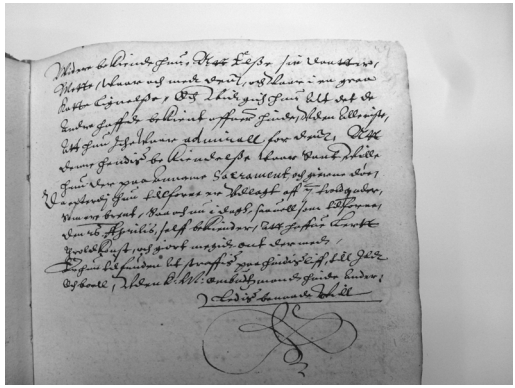

Figure 10. Extract from the court proceedings demonstrating the use of Latin letters in the word *admirall,* here underlined. Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate [Statsarkivet i Tromsø, Sorenskriveren i Finnmarks arkiv], no. 6, fo. 29r, April 28, 1621.

November 19, 2017.; SDE: *Den Store Danske Encyklopædi*, 1994–2001, Danmarks Nationalleksikon: Copenhagen.

Used in a Norwegian court, the phrase "mester och *Admiral*" stands out as unusual. As a doublet where the two words both indicate authority, it is an example of semantic repetition or a pleonasm where the first word of the doublet gives an expectation that another word with more or less similar meaning will follow suit. This is a significant feature of oral culture where semantic redundancy functions as an aid to keep both the speaker and the listener on track.[62] It also has a function as a mnemonic tool. In Modern English and Scots the doublet *master and admiral*, or the more common *master and commander*, has become set in a fixed and non-reversible word order, and this seems to be the most usual word order also in Older Scots, although there are examples of a mirrored word order, for example in the court records for the North Berwick trials of 1590–1591, as we shall see later. DOST provides many examples of word strings with "master" plus another term of authority. For example, in 1579, there is the reference to a ship where "Robert Ramsay and Johnne Pedell war skipparis and maisteris," and in 1585, Katharine Jamesoun's spouse is said to be her "maister and commander indur-ing hir liftyme."

The initial word-stress is a prosodic feature in Germanic languages that invites alliteration in this type of doublets, and the Scandinavian languages seem to have preserved and developed this rhythmical feature of orality more than most other Germanic languages. Typical alliterating doublets which are semantic tautologies in modern Norwegian are *tull og tøys* ("nonsense"), *spott og spe* ("public ridicule"), *bulder og brak* ("rumble"), *styre og stell* ("management"), *stumper og stykker* ("smash to pieces"), *takt og tone* ("tact and proper conduct"), and so on. In the Danish Bishop Peder Palladius's *Visitatsbog*, a collection of talks from the mid sixteenth century, there are no less than approximately 125 alliterating or rhyming word pairs—for example *blotte och bar* ("only"), *bygge och boe* ("build and live"), *kyle och kaste* ("throw")—that Peter Skautrup regards as rooted in the spoken word.[63]

Alliteration can also be found in fixed phrases in modern English and Scots, as in *good as gold* and *bits and bobs*, and it is even possible to identify assonance in such fixed pleonasms as *each and every*, for example. Such constructions, however, are as a rule without alliteration or assonance in English and Scots. Legal terminology with doublets like *null and void, deem and consider*, and *terms and conditions*, demonstrate the typical non-alliterating pattern in English and

62. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 39–41.

63. Skautrup, *Det danske Sprogs Historie*, 206–7.

Scots semantic repetition. The extended term written as "mester och *Admiral*" in the court records, therefore, stands out as unusual and is most likely to have been introduced in the Finnmark courtroom by the person who was not a native speaker of a Scandinavian language.

In the terminology and capitalization used in conceptual linguistics, the metaphors "*Admiral*" and the set phrase "*Master and Admiral*" conceptualize the source domain of HIGHEST NAVAL COMMANDER in terms of the target domain LEADER OF WITCHES. As Lakoff and Johnson establish, the function of the metaphor is not "a matter of mere language [but] rather [. . .] a means of structuring our conceptual system."[64] In this particular case the motivation behind the use of the cross-domain lexicalization is to establish that, firstly, there is a strict command structure among witches, and secondly, that the accused women are on top of this command structure, subordinate only to their ultimate commander, the Devil, in the same way that an admiral reports only to the head of the navy, at that time the monarch. The fact that the metaphor is sourced from a naval setting is initially surprising when the target domain is witches. It has the effect, however, of strengthening the aspect of COMMAND STRUCTURE as an urgent and absolute institution: in a fleet and on a ship there is no question about authority and obedience.

It is not unusual in witchcraft trials that a woman is accused of being in charge of other women, and sometimes there are even references to military rank and structures. In Sweden, a woman was accused of commanding a "company" of witches,[65] and a similar military context, where a woman is named as commanding officer of a group of witches, appears in Scottish court cases, such as in Dunfermline in Fife[66] and in the case against Bessie Weir, Paisley, in 1677. There were several people accused in this particular case, and the information that Bessie was an officer for a whole group of witches is admitted by several of the accused. The persecutors address Bessie as "ye in the qualitie of the divills officer."[67]

It is interesting that we find both in the witchcraft trials in Scotland and

64. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 145.

65. Lars Manfred Svenungsson, *Rannsakningarna om trolldomen i Bohuslän 1669–1672: häxorna, satan, rätten* (Hjärtum: Lilla Edet, 1970), 59, 89.

66. Stuart Macdonald, "In Search of the Devil in Fife Witchcraft Cases," in *The Scottish Witch-hunt in Context*, ed. Julian Goodare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 41.

67. National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh (NRS) Circuit Court Books, JC10/4, fol. 6b.

Finnmark a repeated use of the naval term "admiral" as the title for a leader of a group of witches. The title is already in use during the North Berwick trials in 1590–1591. During the interrogation of Euphame MacCalzean in 1591, she is led to admit that there is truth in the accusation that Robert Greirsoun is "youre [her] admerall and maister man."[68]

The use of the naval term in the trials in Scotland and Finnmark is so special that there can hardly be a question of coincidence. Not only is the same word applied in the same legal context; in addition, the noun is utilized in a very similar set phrase where only the word order differs: *admerall and maister man / mester och Admiral*, and in both cases the phrase is employed as a metaphor about a woman in charge of a group of witches casting a storm over ships at sea.

The admiral metaphor demonstrates a quality that some metaphors can possess, namely the compression of complex relationships,[69] so that they can be more easily understood by those outside of the domain where the concept is normally employed.

The implication of the expressions involving "admiral" is that one person is in charge of a larger group, and as a conceptual metaphor it is clearly used to illustrate the doctrine of demonology, where a person entering a pact with the Devil accepts the overlordship of the Devil. When entering the pact, power is transferred from the Devil, and from that point on the receiving person has to obey the Evil One, and is able to perform evil deeds and command others to do so. The image of entering the pact and of the newly gained power is parallel to that of a military command structure, or that onboard a ship. Obedience should be absolute, as seen, for instance, during the North Berwick convention: the Devil asked from the pulpit if they had been loyal servants and had committed evil deeds since last he met with them. Yet another aspect of the loyalty to the master is the parallel between choosing the Devil's side, and not God's, and ultimate loyalty to the commander of the ship at sea. In our context, the use of the phrase carries a specific notion related to the fixed structure of a pact in a demonological power structure: one figure in charge of subordinate followers.

BALLVOLLEN

The term *Ballvollen* is one more linguistic unit that seems to have made the journey from Scotland to Finnmark. This term is also related to witches' gatherings, and is thus linked to demonological notions.

68. NRS, Circuit Court Books, JC2/2, fol. 224a.

69. E.g. Seana Coulson, "Conceptual Blending in Thought, Rhetoric, and Ideology," in *Cognitive Linguistics: Current Applications and Future Perspectives*, ed. Gitte Kris-

Playing ball games in fields was frequently practiced all over Scotland at the time.[70] It was also known that witches had meetings in fields in the outskirts of the village. In an article about the witches' sabbath in Scotland, Laura Paterson stresses the magical importance of specific places within temporal boundaries, the localization of places for witches' meetings in the outskirts of nearby settlements, and representations of boundaries with the other world "located within a few miles of the witches' homes."[71]

It is probably the combination of these two activities, with the field close to a settlement as a common denominator, which results in the image of witches' meetings held on ball fields. This commonly shared knowledge came to the fore during accused persons' confessions, as "the witches were responding to the interrogator's questions based on their own knowledge and beliefs."[72] In other words, the associative implication for the examined witch was that this type of location was also the usual meeting place for witches.

It is easy to see why fields where people could gather outside the village could be seen as potentially dangerous to the established order. These were liminal locations where the restrictions imposed by church and civil authorities could be transcended, and where the openness of the natural surroundings added a quality of independence.

In Scotland, such gathering places of witches appear in the court records as the *Ba'ley* or *Ballgreen* or *Ba'green*. The semantics of this expression are rendered in the Finnmark courtroom as *Ballvollen*. (This is a normalized, modern Norwegian form, which in the court records is written with or without an initial capital: "Balduolden" or "balduolden." Notice that the final *–en* in *Ballvollen* is the enclitic definite article. For the sake of simplicity, in the following we will capitalize *Ballvollen*, and also *Ba'ley* and *Ba'green*. The sources are inconsistent on this point.)[73]

The idea that witches used to meet at a place where ballgames were played appears for the first time in Finnmark in 1621, and it is likely that it was Cunningham who at that time introduced *Ballvollen* to the Finnmark courtroom, based on the Scottish *Ba'ley* or *Ba'green*.

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tiansen, Michel Achard, René Dirven, and Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006): 187–210.

70. John D. M. Robertson, *The Kirkwall Ba': Between the Water and the Wall* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2005).

71. Laura Paterson, "The Witches' Sabbath in Scotland," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* no. 142 (2012): 391.

72. Ibid., 387.

73. For a more detailed discussion, see Kruse and Willumsen, *Ordet Ballvollen knytt til transnasjonal overføring av idéar.*

Ballvollen is mentioned six times in court cases held in 1621 in Finnmark. On January 29, Mari Jørgensdatter admitted that she was drinking together with eleven other witches on *Ballvollen* by Vardø, and the day after Maritte Olufsdatter is accused for having collected Kirsten Sørensdatter for a gathering at *Ballvollen*. Maritte admits the accusation, and on February 16, she further admits to having taken part in a witches' gathering on Christmas Eve on *Ballvollen* and on the mountain Lyderhorn. On the same day, Anne Lauritsdatter confesses that she followed Satan and forty other witches to Vardø, where they went drinking on *Ballvollen*, and Ragnhilde Olufsdatter too concedes to have taken part in a witches' gathering on *Ballvollen* in Vardø, where they were drinking. Two months later, on April 26, Kirsten Sørensdatter admits that Maritte Olufsdatter came to get her for a big gathering on Christmas Eve on *Ballvollen* in Vardø, where they were dancing and drinking.[74] In the autumn of the same year Mette Thorgjersdatter is prosecuted at a court set in Gåsnes, Finnmark, where she is asked if "she had taken part in Vardø at *Ballvollen* last winter" (hun haffde været med i Vardøen paa Ballvolden i forgangen Vinter). Mette denies this and her case is deferred.[75]

Ballvollen does not again appear in the sources until 1624 and 1625. Anne Edisdatter confesses on November 24, 1624 to having gathered on *Ballvollen* together with six other witches, and to having made a knot on a cloth, creating a storm that capsized several boats.[76] Gundell Olsdatter appears before the court several times, the last time April 25, 1625, and she admits to having been on *Ballvollen* on Christmas Eve together with many other witches—among them Ingeborg Jørgensdatter, who had a cloth with knots on it—and that she (Ingeborg) had the shape of a human over the belt but not under, and that the others had taken the shape of cats and dogs.[77]

The word never again appears in the court proceedings.

As in the case with "Master and Admiral," we notice the use of repetition, especially in 1621, not only of *Ballvollen* itself but also of the precision of the location to Vardø and the associated activity of drinking (and dancing) and big witches' gatherings at this location. Again, we can presuppose leading questions from the interrogators, and in the case of Mette Thorgjersdatter, we actually notice the phrase used in a quote by the prosecutor himself. Although there is an element of *maleficium* in the 1624–1625 trials in the

74. RSAT, no. 6, fol. 28b.

75. RSAT, no. 6, fol. 41a.

76. RSAT, no. 6, fols. 96ab & 121b.

77. *Tingbok for Finnmark 1620–1633*, ed. Hilde Sandvik and Harald Winge (Oslo: Norsk lokalhistorisk institutt, 1987), 344–78.

form of making knots on a piece of cloth in order to create storms, the repeated concept of witches' meetings is inspired by demonology, as is the shape-shifting taking place in the last trial of 1625.

A grammatical categorization of the units *Ba'ley* and *Ballvollen* is not straightforward. In the following, the cognitive act involved in naming and the creative motives behind the words will be considered, but first, however, some notes on the background and semantic content of the words.

If it is Cunningham who introduces the word *Ballvollen* to the Finnmark courtroom, it is interesting to note that he does not make use of the Norwegian noun *li*, to create a possible ⋆*Ball-li*, which would have been a near homophone to the Scottish *Ba'ley*. The Scots noun *ley* or *lea* or *lee* and the Norwegian *li* /li/, f., both refer to a feature in the terrain. The semantic meaning of the words, however, differs between the two languages, reflecting an unrelated etymology. The Scots noun refers to a "field" or, more specifically, a "fallow field," with an origin in Old English *lēah*, "piece of arable land" (DOST). The Norwegian *li*, f., from Old Norse *hlíð*, f., means "(mountain) slope," and has an etymological background in Germanic ⋆*hli*, "to slope" (Falk and Torp, 1903–1906). In Danish, the noun *li*, m., only exists as a poetic and antiquated word (ODS) and it is reasonable to assume that Cunningham did not know this rare word in Danish, having acquired the language imperfectly as an adult. Potentially, it could be that Cunningham knew the word in Danish and was aware of the fact that a *li* is not descriptive of a landscape that could be used for most ball games. In any case, Cunningham employs *voll*, m., which both in Danish (in modern Danish written *vold*) and Norwegian is the usual appellative for "(even) meadow," implying "field where ball games can be played." The Germanic ⋆*wálþu-*, "meadow" has in Modern English and German developed into *wold* and *Wald* "forest, wood."[78] In English, an old meaning of "hill" is not documented after the sixteenth century, and the meaning "elevated tract of open country or moorland" exists, but "since c. 1600 in vague poetical use" (OED), as is the only use of the cognate *wauld* in Scots (DOST).

So far, we have discussed the separate elements of the cognate words, but at a cognitive level we must also consider the processing of the linguistic units as they are actually used, that is, without breaking them down into separate elements. An interesting question is whether the nouns *Ba'ley* and *Ballvollen* should be classified as appellatives or proper names—in short, if their function as nouns is experienced as characterizing or distinguishing.

78. Harald Bjorv and Fredrik Otto Lindeman, *Våre arveord. Etymologisk ordbok* (Oslo: Novus forlag, 2007).

In both Denmark-Norway and in Scotland, orthography was unstable at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Still, the first element of the words in question is fully preserved or indicated in both areas, as *ba'* or *ball*, the former with a consonant embedded in the apostrophe, following Scottish orthography at the time. Therefore, a literary interpretation is close at hand in both areas, namely "a (round) ball." The second element has several spelling possibilities, but all are united in the semantic content "level place where you can play ball games."[79]

The court clerk sometimes writes *balduolden* and at other times he capitalizes it: *Balduolden*. In the written Danish at that time, both appellatives and proper names should in principle be capitalized, but in the court records it seems this rule is more consistently followed for proper names than for appellatives. The inconsistency may be seen as indicative of the clerk's uncertainty of whether the term is a name or an appellative. The first element of the word *Ballvollen* might in theory have been written *ball*, *bald*, *bal*, or *bold* with a small or capitalized first letter. The first three examples would most likely have been pronounced in the same way. The second element of the word could be written *wolden*, *vollen*, *uolden*, or *uollen*.

Ballvollen is in Danish and Norwegian semantically transparent, as *Ba'ley* and *Ba'green* are in Scots, and can be said to illustrate a classic problem in onomastics, namely how to distinguish what constitutes an appellative and what constitutes a name. *Ballvollen* does not seem to exist as a modern place name in Vardø, and we have not been able to find it on old or modern local maps. It is not evident if the participants in the communicational situations in the courtrooms see *Ba'ley* or *Ballvollen* as representing a type or one of its manifestations.

Because the words in question are used only in historical texts, it is not possible to exercise diagnostic tests to categorically establish if they are proper names or common nouns.[80] We will, for example, never know if the use of a restrictive relative clause—which proprial antecedents do not allow because of their unique denotation—would have made sense for the parties involved in the courtroom discourses:

(⋆) The Ba'green that is by the river is now flooded.

79. The term has been elaborated in further detail by the Norwegian scholar Nils Hallan: Nils Hallan, "Balvolden (Balduolden)," in *Håløygminne* (1975): 276–87.

80. See Willy Van Langendonck and Mark Van de Velde, "Names and Grammar" in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, ed. C. Hough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 17–38, 22–32.

(*) Ballvollen som ligg ved elva, er no overflødd.

The only thing we can hope for is to establish a degree of definiteness. Ronald W. Langacker discusses the practical fluidity in which linguistic units in the form of proper names take on the function of common nouns.[81] What Langacker says about personal names can also be applied to toponyms:

> The uniqueness of the name assures the definiteness of this nominal expression—provided, that is, that the word conforms to the cognitive model. When it does not, i.e. when the same name is borne by more than one person, the conditions are present for using it as a common noun.[82]

For place names it is not so much a problem that several places can have the same name, but rather that the location a place name refers to can be vague or changeable—that its denotation is not fixed. A farmer who grows the crops potatoes and corn can refer to "the potato field" and "the corn-field," and on the farm, the terms will refer to particular locations at a given time—that is, they will function as manifestations, not types. The following year, the farmer may have rotated his or her crops and the terms' locations will have swapped, but the terms' function as address tags continues at that particular time and place and in that same user group, albeit they now refer to different locations.[83] A similar vague definiteness is probably what we observe in the court records context in Finnmark, where it is not evident whether the term *Ballvollen* is used with a particular place in mind, i.e. with a fixed denotation. On a scale of definiteness, *Ballvollen* comes close to a common, characterizing noun, not least because it is easy to translate: unlike distinct place names at the other end of the scale, of the type *Vardø* and *Edinburgh*, which lack semantic transparency.

As mentioned above, it may well be that it is Cunningham himself who is interrogating Kirsten Sørensdatter, asking her if she had met other women on *Ballvollen*. What Cunningham probably did was to translate the concept "field where ball games are played outside a village," which he knew from his Scottish background. Kirsten herself possibly linked the translated term to

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81. Ronald W. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, Vol. 2: "Descriptive Application" (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 58–60.

82. Ibid., 60.

83. See Arne Kruse, "Scandinavian-American Place-names as Viewed from the Old World," in *Language Contact Across the North Atlantic*, ed. P. S. Ureland and I. Clarkson (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1996), 255–67, 262–63.

a location on the Vardø peninsula where ball games may have been played. She may have had a specific location in mind, or she may not have attached any particular place to the expression, which she had possibly heard for the first time. Because of the semantic transparency, she would have instantly understood the meaning of the word, but to her, the word would of course have had no connotation attached to witches before the interrogator introduces this in the subsequent discourse, referring to the confessions of the women who had denounced her.

There is also a pragmatic connection to the use of *Ba'lea* and *Ballvollen* in Scotland and Finnmark. In Scotland, the women allegedly met at the *Ba'lea* with the same intention as the women in Finnmark who allegedly met at *Ballvollen*, namely to congregate as witches with the Evil One in their midst. Apart from in Germany, where they could meet at the *Tanzenplatz*, there are few other areas in Europe where witches meet in a field. The popular location for witches to congregate was on certain mountains. In addition to admitting to having met at *Ballvollen*, the Norwegian women also claim to have met on certain mountains: *Domen* by Vardø, *Dovrefjell* in central southern Norway, *Lyderhorn* by Bergen, and *Hekla*, the Icelandic volcano.[84] In Finnmark, the notion of meeting in a field had a short lifespan. Only from 1621 to 1625 does it appear in the court records.

To corroborate the chronology of the transfer of this motif, or the concept that witches met in a field close to the village, between Scotland and Norway—which involves corroborating that it existed in Scotland before it appeared in Finnmark—we must for the final time return to the North Berwick trials of 1590–1591. A prominent feature of the confessions in the trials was that witches met in fields near settlements, such as the convention at Achinson's Haven, near Prestonpans, east of Edinburgh, with the main purpose of preventing Queen Anne's homecoming to Scotland. This gathering supposedly took place on July 31, 1589, on Lammas Eve. This event is mentioned in the confessions of the majority of the accused during the trials, including those of Agnes Sampson, Euphame MacCalzean, Geillis Duncan, Janet Stratton, and Donald Robson. Allegedly, there were ten leaders and thirty subordinates present. For example, Euphame MacCalzean mentions "the conventioun haldin att the New Heavin callit the Fyrie-hoillis att lambmes lastwes" and one of the points of the dittay is "the tressonable conventioun haldin be hir and thame att the New Heavin callit Aitchesounis Heavi[n] att lambmes last was."[85]

84. Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, trans. J. S. Stallybrass, 4 vols. III (London: Bell, 1883), 923; Willumsen, *Witches of the North*, 254.

85. NRS, Books of Adjournal, JC2/2, fol. 223v.

Agnes Sampson, one of the main accused persons in the North Berwick trials who was interrogated in detail by King James VI, also mentions the same convention. In addition, she met the Devil in the field close to her own home in Nether Keith near Haddington, she "confest before his maiesteis That the devill in ma[n]nis liknes mett mett (*sic*) hir going out in the feildis frome hir awin hous."[86] That the destinations for witches' meetings most often are local is supported by Julian Goodare in an article on flying witches in Scotland.[87] The notion that witches met in fields was a central feature already in the North Berwick trials of 1590–1591, as seen in Agnes Sampson's confession. Another interesting link between witches and ball playing is the mention of a ball in the court records of another accused in the North Berwick trials, John Fian: the Devil allegedly cast "a thing like to a football" into the sea as part of the spell to raise storms.[88]

This is thirty years before parallel ideas appear in Finnmark. For the District Governor of Vardøhus in 1621 it would have been convenient to call on his inherent knowledge and introduce the idea that a meeting between witches and the Devil occurred in a field in Vardø called *Ballvollen*.

CONCLUSION

We have argued that both the notions *Admiral och mester* and *Ballvollen* most likely were introduced to Finnmark along with other demonological ideas about the Devil and his nature. These ideas were introduced by the legal authority John Cunningham, who knew the European doctrine of demonology—that is, the power of the Devil and the range of his work. When the word *Ballvollen* was mentioned in the Finnmark court records from the beginning of the 1620s, it is our opinion that the transference of demonological ideas from Scotland to Finnmark was taking place in the courtroom. The same ideas that were brought to the forefront by King James VI during the North Berwick trials in 1590 when he interrogated suspected witches then appeared in a Finnmark courtroom. The King of Scots and the "king" of Finnmark both used their power as supremes in a legal courtroom to transmit and activate modern witchcraft ideas in their respective "royal" areas. This highlights the role of the personal dimension in the initiation and the continuation of witchcraft trials, as the mental baggage of the King and

86. NRS, Books of Adjournal, JC2/2 fol. 205v.

87. Julian Goodare, *Flying Witches in Scotland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 166.

88. Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 139–140, 228.

the District Governor came to be decisive in several waves of severe witchcraft trials in the two countries. The content of the trials and the justification of the sentences that were passed were based on demonological ideas, which, by producing panics, had tragic outcomes for a large number of innocent people.

It was possible to adapt both expressions to the new settings in Finnmark because they belonged to a range of demonological motifs introduced during the witchcraft panic of 1620–1621. The idea of the witches' gathering or sabbath was one of the core notions of elaborated demonology. So was the idea of such gatherings having a fixed structure, with a leader in charge. The two words came to affect other terms in the ideological construct of witchcraft—first and foremost the idea of collective worship of the Evil One. The term *Ballvollen* brings into the judicial witchcraft discourse the notion of collective worship of the Evil One and collective witchcraft operations. The notion of witches' gatherings was of utmost importance in the countries and regions where intense serial witch hunts occurred.[89] Scotland and Finnmark were two such places.

What we hope we have demonstrated is not only that certain terms were transferred directly from Scotland to Finnmark, but also that these terms were indicative of a whole package of ideological concepts which had a severe impact on the conduct of witchcraft trials in Finnmark in the 1620s and, indeed, throughout the five subsequent decades.[90] We see that the perception of these notions was lifted from Scotland and taken to Finnmark, where it manifested itself in courtroom proceedings. The factual expressions are carriers of a complex of ideas—core elements in the expanded central European demonology.

The title of this article, "Magic Language," is meant to suggest the way certain expressions, loaded with associative connotations, can reveal how a whole set of ideas may be effectively and successfully transmitted. When such notions are activated in a new linguistic and cultural environment, the semantic and associative content of the expressions adjust to the new language and the new setting. This is where language is magic because particular expressions, like *mester och Admiral* and *Ballvollen*, are rooted in cognitive concepts that are possible to unveil through language analysis. These expressions can be compared to narratives carrying the notion of the Devil and his work affecting a large group of people. The Devil, like an *admiral*, is the overlord of others, and *Ballvollen* is a field inviting witches to gather.

89. Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt*, 86–87.
90. Willumsen, *Witches of the North*, 253.